NATIONAL SECURITY

CIA official's son killed while fighting in Ukraine, spy agency says

The CIA confirmed the death of Michael Gloss, 21, after a Russian news site reported that he had signed up to serve with Russian forces.

Michael Gloss. Michael Gloss / via Facebook

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By Dan De Luce

The son of a senior Central Intelligence Agency official died last year “while fighting in the conflict in Ukraine,” a CIA spokesperson said Friday.

The spokesperson confirmed the death of Michael Gloss – who is the son of Juliane Gallina, the CIA's deputy director for digital innovation – after a Russian news site reported that the 21-year-old American had signed up to serve with Russia's forces.

The CIA spokesperson said Gallina and her family "suffered an unimaginable personal tragedy in the spring of 2024 when her son Michael Gloss, who struggled with mental health issues, died while fighting in the conflict in Ukraine."

But the statement did not say which side Gloss was fighting for at the time.

"CIA considers Michael's passing to be a private family matter for the Gloss family – not a national security issue," the spokesperson said. "The entire CIA family is heartbroken for their loss."

"Juliane and her husband shared that 'we adored our son and grieve his loss every moment. We appreciate privacy at this difficult time.'" the spokesperson added.

Juliane Gallina. NBC News

In social media posts last year, Michael Gloss shared a photo of himself smiling in Moscow's Red Square and expressed sympathy for Russia's war effort against what he called "the

Ukraine Proxy war."

He wrote that news coverage of the war, which he called "western propaganda," was concealing the reality of a conflict in which an allegedly corrupt Ukrainian military was no match for Russian troops.

"Rus is slaughtering dem boys on sight," he wrote.

On his page on the Russian social media site VKontakte, the backdrop to Gloss' photo in Red Square shows Soviet-era war propaganda.

The Russian news site Important Stories was first to report on Gloss' death. Citing Russian government information and Gloss' social media posts, it documented his extensive overseas travels, which culminated in him joining the Russian army.

Michael Gloss. Michael Gloss / via Facebook

According to an obituary published by the family last year, Gloss died “while traveling in Eastern Europe,” but made no mention of Russia or the war in Ukraine.

It added that he lived a “brief, but fiercely beautiful life until he was taken from us during his travels overseas.”

“Michael should be remembered for his noble heart, and warrior spirit,” the obituary said.

Reached Friday, Michael Gloss' maternal grandmother, Marie Cook, declined to confirm details of her grandson's death and instead referred questions to her daughter, Gallina.

"My daughter and son-in-law are the best parents I have ever seen in my life," Cook said. "This is a tragedy."

Gallina was appointed last year to her current position at the CIA and has held senior roles overseeing technology and cybersecurity. She also worked as an executive at IBM and began her career as a Navy cryptologic officer, retiring from the Navy Reserves in 2013. At the U.S. Naval Academy, Gallina made history as the first woman to lead the brigade of midshipmen.

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In an interview with NBC News last year, Gallina discussed the threats posed by China and Russia to America's cybersecurity.

Gloss' father, Larry Gloss, is a Navy veteran who served in Operation Desert Storm and works in cybersecurity in the private sector.

Michael Gloss attended Oakton High School in the northern Virginia suburb of Vienna, where he played football and lacrosse, according to social media. He later attended the College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, Maine, where he studied human ecology, according to his obituary.

The obituary said that "Michael grew to be physically strong and tall, thoughtful and principled, and from an early age he used these strengths to protect and guard against

injustice of all forms – whether it was on the playground, on the field or in politics."

The obituary offers suggestions for causes to donate to that Michael Gloss embraced, including charities devoted to helping refugees and protecting the environment. And it also suggested a charity "we hope will help others," the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Dan De Luce
Dan De Luce is a reporter for the NBC News Investigative Unit.

Rich Schapiro contributed.